Telling the Truth on the Kennedy Assassination

Let me tell you about a guy who spent a couple of years doing a book that tells the truth. The book is "Case Closed." It was written by Gerald Posner and published by Random House. In "Case Closed," Posner shows that Lee Harvey Oswald killed President John F. Kennedy by himself. Case closed.

He also shows the shameless liars who sell conspiracy stories and damage the people who deserve to be told the truth.

First would be Oliver Stone, whose movie "JFK" was what my friend Fred Dannen of the New Yorker magazine calls, "An intellectual snuff film. Literal truth is murdered on screen."

There was one night when I stood around Lincoln Center and went insane as I listened to people coming out of the movie and discussing, so reasonably, the notion that Lee Oswald didn't shoot Kennedy.

Please don't make what I have seen of life a lie. I was in Dallas on the day Kennedy was shot and spoke to the doctor who was doing the chest thumping at the end. He knew two bullets had hit Kennedy in the back. Which meant Oswald. And I had been with the Dallas police, who had just lost officer J.D. Tippit. He had been killed by Oswald, who, completely alone, was trying to get away and had no idea where to go.

The movie is gone for now, but in order to keep a lie alive, one that drew $200 million at the box office, Oliver Stone sends the video of his movie to schools around the country so they can show it in years to come.

And people who catch the disease are writing more books about a conspiracy that never happened.

But finally, here is Gerald Posner, who worked like a ditchdigger and documented every paragraph of "Case Closed" and can tell us:

"But for those seeking the truth, the facts are incontrovertible. They can be tested against credible testimony, documents and the latest scientific advances. Chasing shadows across the grassy knoll will never be the substitute for real history. Lee Harvey Oswald, driven by his own twisted and impenetrable furies, was the only assassin at Dealey Plaza on Nov. 22, 1963. To say otherwise, in the light of the overwhelming evidence, is to absolve a man with blood on his hands and to mock the President he killed."

"Case Closed" shows that Lee Harvey Oswald's palm prints were all over boxes he used to put up a sniper's nest at the window from which he shot. That prints were all over the gun and the paper it was wrapped in when he brought it to work.

In the movie, they had the FBI taking Oswald's hand, after he was shot, and slapping it on the gun to provide a handprint.

And in the movie, Stone never had Oswald firing a shot.

After the shooting, Oswald ran out of the Texas School Book Depository building and had to get on a bus, get off the bus, then murder Tippit in broad daylight in the street and run into a movie without paying and try to hide.

In the movie, the shooting of the officer, Tippit, simply did not happen. Posner shows that what this Stone did was to take two big best-selling conspiracy books, one by Jim Garrison, the New Orleans district attorney who was crazed, and the other by Jim Marrs, who wrote that Kennedy was shot by a world-class assassin who was hired by the world crime syndicate, the CIA, the anti-Castro people and the right wing and the U.S. military. Both of these books made a lot of money and covered the shelves with slime. They were the basis for a movie that spread conspiracy tales that probably will be around in this country for decades.

As Posner shows in "Case Closed," it takes a villain to sit down and twist every detail of a truth and turn it into a dangerous lie, one made more evil by its popularity.

I sat in an office at Parkland Hospital with Dr. Malcolm Perry a few hours after President Kennedy was killed. Perry had been one of the first two medical people in the trauma room when Kennedy was brought in.

Perry, appalled by 30 years of conspiracy stories, was elated when Posner came around and asked for the truth.

That day in 1963, Perry had been eating lunch in the cafeteria, salmon croquettes, when the call came that they were bringing the President in.

He cut Kennedy's throat to insert a tube for breathing. The cut was directly over an exit wound from a shot that had hit Kennedy in the back of the neck. Dr. Pepper Jenkins, who had done the most gunshot wounds, felt the entrance wound in the back of the neck. Perry began massaging Kennedy's chest, and the guy working with him, Kemp Clark, said, "It's too late, Mac."

In all conspiracy theories, they demand to know why Kennedy's body hadn't been turned over so they could look for a wound in the back.

Kennedy was dead and his wife was standing over him.

And the doctors said they didn't turn him over because they "didn't have the heart."

There was a morning in my memory when the late John Connally, who had been in front of Kennedy in the car in Dallas, walked into the unopened bar of the Regency Hotel on Park Avenue and with busboys and cleaning men looking at him, he pulled off his jacket and shirt and showed a long wound behind his right shoulder. Connally said it showed that the bullet had been tumbling over as it hit him because it already had gone through Kennedy's shoulder and neck. In "Case Closed," Posner has this magnificently documented.

Connally then showed the big exit wound in his chest, then held up his right wrist. There was another dark brown bullet hole. The bullet, tumbling out of his chest, had taken clothing with it into the wrist wound.

He tapped his left thigh. "It wound up here."

He told the busboys, "One bullet did that. Through the President first and then right through me."

Connally's story was of no value for any conspiracy book because it ruined all theories of more shooters than Oswald. But now, all these years later, we have Gerald Posner, who cares about telling the truth in the times that he lives, and telling it so well that it can be left for others. Which, rather than blood money, is the job of a true writer.

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